

Myles Standish

We had an interesting visit to the Clipper this week from Sheila Hindle of Duxbury, England. (See story on page 1B). Ms. Hindle maintains that Duxbury (UK) is the ancestral home of Myles Standish contrary to many other historical accounts. We'll leave that topic to the historians, but with all this talk we thought some background on one of Duxbury's (Mass.) founding fathers was in order.

The following information on Myles Standish is excerpted from the Duxbury Book (1637-1987), published by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society:

Frances Leach's account of Captain Myles Standish in the DR&HS's *Duxbury Book 1637-1987* notes that Myles Standish was born in 1584 in the Isle of Man where his family had lived for four generations having migrated to the island from Ormskirk in Lancashire.

While serving with the English forces in Holland, Myles Standish made friends with the Pilgrims who later recruited him to provide protection for their proposed settlement in the New World. In Myles Standish the Pilgrims found not only an experienced military professional but also an unusual soldier, one who soon demonstrated his ability to lead in the economic and civil affairs of the colony as well as to train and command its citizens soldiers.

In 1625 Captain Standish went back to England where he laid the groundwork for the agreement between Plymouth Plantation and the London merchants by which the people of Plymouth were able to buy out the merchants' interest and acquire ownership of the assets of the company. These financial arrangements made possible the early land grants that became the basis for the settlement of Duxbury.

In 1631, Captain Standish sold his two acres in Plymouth and moved his family and livestock to a new home on his 100-acre grant at the southeastern end of the peninsula, once called Captain's Nook, but now known in part as Standish Shore. In 1637 an additional grant extended his boundaries to include the easterly side of Captain's Hill. This was probably his share as heir of his deceased wife, Rose, who had not survived the first terrible winter in Plymouth. In 1623, Myles Standish married Barbara, who had arrived that year on the *Anne*, and by 1627 they had three boys, John, Alexander and Charles. There was probably an additional Myles Jr. by the time the Standish's settled into their Duxbury homestead. With them came Hobomock, Myles Standish's faithful Indian friend, who lived with the family until his death in 1642.

Myles Standish built his long narrow house on a high bluff with a commanding view of Plymouth Harbor and the channel leading to the open sea. Like his Duxbury neighbors, Myles Standish had to provide the necessities for a growing family. (The records show that he was paid for his service to the Plymouth Colony only occasionally and sparingly at that)/ He

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planted rye, peas, wheat, Indian corn as well as flax, hemp and he raised sheep cattle and horses. After 1640 he could take his corn to the Duxbury mill to be ground and he could sell his surplus livestock and commodities at the Duxbury fair held each October by order of the general court.

During his Duxbury years Myles Standish was frequently away from home on colony business, often for several days at a time. He continued to be elected assistant governor for most of his life. The assistant governors were a powerful group of elected officials who performed executive and judicial functions as well whet they met with the General Court. They also acted as the governor's council to advise on important decisions. Myles Standish was treasurer of the colony for twelve years from, 1644 through 1656.

Captain Standish continued to perform his military duties when called upon to do so. He trained the militia in Duxbury, Plymouth and Marshfield and

was appointed commanding officer in the entire colony militia in 1649 retaining his rank of Captain. He was seventy years old in 1654 the last time the summons came to command the troops, though the campaign was cancelled.

He often worked with John Alden to survey the bounds of countless land grants and established the boundaries for entire towns. He was often the colony's agent for purchasing land from the Indians, perhaps because he was proficient in the Indian language. One of the the largest transactions was his purchase of 196 square miles from Massasoit in 1649/50. Most of this land was granted by Plymouth General Court to the people of Duxbury, and for six years was called Duxburrow New Plantation before it became the town of Bridgewater incorporated in 1656 (paid for with: 7 coates ayd&halfe in a coat, 9 hatchetsm 6 howoes, 20 knives, 4 moose skins, 10 yards and half of cotton.)

Despite his dedication to the success of Plymouth Colony, he never joined the Pilgrim

Church although he regularly attended services.

His impressive library indicates that he was a Protestant with Puritan leanings more liberal than the Pilgrim fathers. In fact, in 1645, Standish supported a petition for complete religious toleration in Plymouth Colony. This movement was favored by many of the deputies but failed when Governor Bradford refused to let the matter come to a vote in the General Court.

Differing religious ideas did not prevent Myles Standish and Elder William Brewster, his Duxbury neighbor, from becoming cherished friends. Standish got along well with the Elder's sons, Jonathon and Love, but he quarreled with Francis Eaton's sons when they moved back onto their father's grant which adjoined that of Standish. The Captain took Samuel Eaton to court over boundary disputes and in another case got a 30-shilling judgement against Benjamin Eaton for one of Standish's sheep killed by young Easton's dog. These were minor irritations for Standish, but his tem-

per really flared when his old enemy Thomas Morton published New England Canaan, in which he satirized the Pilgrims and ridiculed Standish calling him Captain Shrimpe. When Morton appeared on Standish's farm to hunt for ducks and geese, Standish was incensed though there was little he could do about it because fishing and hunting rights were free to all men by order of the General Court.

Standish was a passionate man move deeply by his loyalty to his friends and his love for his wife and children. He had lost two young sons, John and Charles and later a daughter, Lora, probably his favorite child. He had also deeply loved his daughter-in-law, Mary who loved only a short time after her marriage to Josias Standish. He asked in his will to be buried as near as possible to the two deceased young women,

After 36 years of loyal service to Plymouth Colony, he died in October 1656 and was buried with honor in Duxbury in the Old Burying Ground next to the site of the first Meeting House on what is now Chestnut Street.

Duxbury Clipper Oct, 2000